

that one had previously thought would bring happiness), the senselessness of contingent events that bring misfortune to one-self or to others, the sheer greed, stupidity, and irrationality that so often create and sustain historical earthquakes that swallow up the promises and hopes of individuals—all these and more make the pursuit of happiness in this life a precarious, if not an impossible, enterprise. For Kierkegaard, at any rate, it is within the limited sphere in which one's finite freedom is effective that one ought to "express the universal-human and the individual," ought to strive to become an authentic self, to intensify personal existence in subjectivity.

In a decidedly unedifying time such as ours it is rejuvenating to hear at least someone say that it is possible *aedificare*, "to build" or "to construct" something. If the cynic asks, why ought I to exist?, Kierkegaard would probably answer: because it is never possible, so long as one lives, to obliterate the inchoate realization that you *can* exist—to deny completely your subjective knowledge of your potentiality-for-becoming-a-self.

## Notes

### Chapter 1

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. by L. Capel (New York, 1965), p. 13.

2. Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. by H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Bloomington and London, 1970), vol. 2, p. 221: "I feel what for me . . . is an enigmatical respect for Hegel; I have learned much from him, and I know very well that I can still learn much from him when I return to him again. . . . His philosophical knowledge, his amazing learning, the insight of his genius, and everything else good that can be said of a philosopher I am willing to acknowledge as any disciple."

3. Throughout his interesting commentary on Hegel's "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Kaufmann attempts to undermine Kierkegaard's originality. He suggests that Hegel provided a "critique of Kierkegaard before the latter was born" [sic!], that Kierkegaard relied heavily on the *Phenomenology*, and that the description of the self in *Sickness unto Death* is "taken straight from . . . the Phenomenology." (Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* [New York, 1965], pp. 19, 35.) While it is certainly correct to say that Kierkegaard's philosophical language is quite often Hegelian, it is misleading to suggest that Kierkegaard did not employ Hegel's language in a unique way in order to formulate his conception of the self (which of course, is not expressed solely in *Sickness unto Death*) and his original emphasis upon the existential dimensions of human life. The basis of my objections to such undermining references to Kierkegaard is the insinuation that Hegel's thought incorporated Kierkegaard's extentialism and that Kierkegaard did not really "go beyond" Hegel in his conceptions of human existence or the dialectic of life.

4. The description of the "nihilistic standpoint" as a possibility for man at any time was first presented in the *Concept of Irony*, which was written in 1841, some thirty-one years before Nietzsche wrote his first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Furthermore, the following

journal entries indicate that Kierkegaard was aware of the threat of nihilism as a general cultural phenomenon some time before Nietzsche's philosophical writings. Kierkegaard remarks that "since Christianity has been abolished . . . the whole realm of the temporal has . . . come to be muddled, with the result that it is no longer a question of a revolution once in a while, but underneath everything is a revolution which can explode at any moment. . . . It is certainly true . . . that the more meaningless we make life, the easier it is, and therefore that life in a sense has actually become easier . . . by abolishing Christianity. But . . . when a generation must live in and for merely finite ends, life becomes a whirlpool, meaninglessness, and either a despairing arrogance or a despairing disconsolateness." *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, trans. by H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Bloomington and London, 1967), I, pp. 437-38.

5. Cp. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford 1952), p. 109: "The right of individuals to be subjectively destined to freedom is fulfilled when they belong to an . . . ethical order, because their conviction of their freedom finds its truth in such an objective order. . . ." Cp., also, the following addition to paragraph 145 of the same work: "Since the laws and institutions of the ethical order make up the concept of freedom, they are the . . . universal essence of individuals, who are thus related to them as accidents only. Whether the individual exists or not is all one to the objective ethical order. It alone is permanent and is the power regulating the life of individuals. Thus the ethical order . . . [is] in contrast with . . . the empty business of individuals [which] is only a game of see-saw."

In F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies* (New York, 1951), p. 109, Hegel's concept of "the universal Ethos" is appealed to in a critique of a subjective ethics. Bradley attributes to Hegel the view that an "isolated morality of one's own is futile and . . . impossible of attainment." Although this reference is presented as a translation of portions of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, only a few sentences in this reference correspond to anything in the original text. It could be said, however, that Bradley certainly captures the spirit of Hegel's remarks.

6. Norman Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London, 1968), p. 63.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1963), p. 5.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Introduction to Logic*, trans. by T. K. Abbott (New York, 1963), p. 15: "For philosophy . . . is the science of the relation of all knowledge and every use of reason to the ultimate end of human reason, to which . . . all other ends are subordinated. . . . The

field of philosophy . . . may be reduced to the following questions:

1. What can I know?
2. What ought I to do?
3. What may I hope?
4. What is man?

"The first question is answered by *Metaphysics*, the second by *Morals*, the third by *Religion*, and the fourth by *Anthropology*. In reality, however, all these might be reckoned under anthropology, since the first three questions refer to the last."

9. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards (New York, 1967), vol. 2, p. 386.

10. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. by D. F. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 449.

11. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 338.

12. Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, p. 83 ff. While there is a respectable tradition supporting such a straight-forward interpretation of Socratic ethics, Gulley seems to ignore the importance of self-knowledge in Socrates' thought. At only one point in his study does he allude to this aspect of Socratic ethics. Thus, he remarks on page 202 that " . . . the life dedicated to philosophy is, for Socrates, the good life. And by this he means a life dedicated to critical analysis . . . he thinks of this activity as constituting in itself the good, and not as a means to attaining goodness by establishing what the good is . . . it was Socrates' conviction that the good is sufficiently defined in terms of the . . . activity of 'examining oneself and others' by the method of critical analysis which he himself practised." The fact that such a commitment to this kind of existence is characterized as "an objective specification" indicates that Gulley has missed the centrality of self-knowledge in Socrates' thought. For Kierkegaard, at any rate, self-knowledge is central to his conception of ethical existence and the Socratic formula, "know thyself," is equated—in *Either/Or*—with an absolute choice of oneself. In his journals Kierkegaard notes: "Insofar as the ethical could be said to have a knowledge in itself, it is self-knowledge, but this is improperly regarded as a knowledge ['of an object,' *objektive Videnskab*]. It is subjective knowledge." *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, I, p. 289.

13. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, trans. by W. Lowrie (New York, 1962), p. 41: " . . . Socrates . . . was a dialectician, he conceived everything in terms of reflection." The intimate relationship between Socratic irony and what Hegel called a "subjective form of dialectic" (*Lectures on the History of*

*Philosophy* [London, 1955], I, p. 398) is discussed in *The Concept of Irony*, trans. by L. Capel (New York, 1965) in a chapter on "The World Historical Validity of Irony" (pp. 276-88). Throughout *The Concept of Irony*, of course, Socrates is presented as a master of what I have called the dialectic of reflection.

14. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 340.
15. Hermann Diem, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence*, trans. by H. Knight (London, 1959), p. 42.
16. Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, I, pp. 306-07.
17. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 117.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
19. Paul Friedländer, *Plato* (New York, 1964), p. 150.
20. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie in Husserliana*, VII (The Hague, 1956), pp. 7-11.
21. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 279.
22. Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, I, p. 307.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, trans. by Thomas Common (New York, 1960), p. 270.
24. Cf. Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* (New York, 1968), chapter 13 ("Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates"). Kaufmann refers to Nietzsche's "ambiguous" attitude towards Socrates and indicates that a distinction should be made between Nietzsche's attitude toward "Socratism" and toward Socrates the man. Reference is also made to the fact that Nietzsche, like Kierkegaard, likened himself to Socrates at times.
25. It has been argued that "... Wittgenstein holds a view about truth which, by its very nature, makes it impossible to account for the 'truth' of the view itself. ... The final outcome of the *Tractatus* is nihilism. ... It is a nihilism which negates the very possibility of philosophy itself." J. C. Morrison, *Meaning and Truth in Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'* (Paris and The Hague, 1968), p. 143. For an analysis of the contrast between Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's treatment of the correspondence theory of truth, see the following: J. C. Morrison, "Heidegger's Criticism of Wittgenstein's Conception of Truth," *Man and World*, 2, 4 (1969) 551-73. Cf. also: G. J. Stack, "Heidegger's Concept of Meaning," *Philosophy Today*, XVII, (1973), pp. 255-66.
26. Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. by W. Kluback and J. T. Wilde (New York, 1958), pp. 89-103.
27. One of the most accessible sources in English for a statement of this theme is *The End of Philosophy*, trans. by J. Stambaugh (New York, 1973).

28. Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism* (New Haven, 1969), p. xiv.
29. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen, 1957), p. 158.
30. This comparison between the Śūnyavāda teachings and certain aspects of Heidegger's later thought is admittedly exaggerated. There are, however, some similarities in regard to the conception of the impermanence of actuality, the negativity in beings and the ineffable nature of *Sūnya* ("void") as the ground and origin of the being of entities. Cf. S. Dasgupta, *Indian Idealism* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 81, 95, 156.
- What the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna says about *Sunyātā* is similar to some of Heidegger's oracular statements about Being. It is that which is "beyond thought, that which is not produced . . . that which is beyond measure." S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1948), vol. I, p. 663.
- In an introduction to D. T. Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism* (New York, 1956) William Barrett claims that Heidegger confided in a German friend of his [Barrett's] who said that Heidegger saw a relationship between Suzuki's interpretation of Zen Buddhism and his own thought (p. xi). There is little doubt that there are at least some similarities between Heidegger's later philosophy and oriental thought. To pinpoint these relationships in any detail would be a difficult undertaking.
31. Søren Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, I, p. 448.
32. Heidegger makes reference to this indictment of the idea of Being (expressed by Nietzsche in *The Twilight of Idols*) in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by R. Mannheim (New Haven, 1959), p. 36.
33. Hegel describes the nature of finite beings in the following passage which, no doubt, was not far from Heidegger's mind when he sought to delineate the finiteness of *Dasein*. "When we say of things that they are finite, we mean . . . that Non-Being constitutes their nature and their Being. . . . The finite does not only change . . . it perishes; and its perishing is not merely contingent, so that it could be without perishing. It is rather the very being of finite things that they contain the seeds of perishing as their own Being-in-Self, and the hour of their birth is the hour of their death." *Science of Logic*, trans. by W. H. Johnston and L. Struthers (New York, 1929), I, p. 142.
34. S. Dasgupta characterizes the *nāstika* as a form of nihilism which proclaims that "nothing exists." Primarily the *nāstika* doctrine stressed the nonexistence of any transcendent reality or survival

after death. S. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1950), III, pp. 518–21.

35. George J. Stack, "Nietzsche and the Phenomenology of Value," *The Personalist* (1968), p. 84.

36. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig, 1927), I, p. 413. Cf. *Dilthey's Philosophy of Existence* (New York, 1957), p. 20.

37. Cf. George J. Stack, "Kierkegaard's Ironic Stage of Existence," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, XXV, pp. 193–207.

38. Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. xiii.

39. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1952), pp. 12–13: "Philosophy . . . appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. The teaching of the concept . . . is that the ideal first appears over against the real. . . . When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a form of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk."

40. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Last Years, Journals 1853–1855*, trans. by R. G. Smith (New York, 1965), p. 113.

41. In Mahāyāna Buddhism it is paradoxically affirmed that *saṃsāra*—the wheel of birth and death comprising the phenomenal world—and *nirvāṇa* or the transcendental state of liberation from attachment and desire are ultimately one. That is, "The real and the phenomenal are not ultimately different. They are two moments of the same thing, one reality with two aspects. . . . The realm of birth and death is the manifestation of the immortal." S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1948), I, pp. 595–96. A similar identity of the phenomenal realm of time and the transcendental world of eternity is expressed in D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of *Zen Buddhism* (New York, 1956), pp. 266. Cf., also: Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York, 1957), pp. 71–72: "Nirvāṇa is *saṃsāra* . . . [means] that what appears to us to be *saṃsāra* is really *nirvāṇa*, and what appears to be the world of form (*rupa*) is really the void (*sunya*)."

42. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. by D. F. Swenson and L. M. Swenson (Princeton, 1959), I, p. 35.

43. William James, *Selected Papers on Philosophy* (New York, 1956), pp. 106–07.

44. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen, 1957), II, p. 127.

45. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 436.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 227–28.

47. Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen, 1959), pp. 65–66.

Heidegger's supplement to this statement—i.e., that the independence of truth from man is nevertheless a "relation to man"—is unconvincing. To say that A is completely independent of B and then claim that this independence is a relation between A and B seems conceptually odd.

48. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, trans. by T. Malick (Evanston, 1969), pp. 37–39.

49. Rosen, *Nihilism*, pp. 100–01.

50. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 287.

51. Hölderlin, *Samtliche Werke*, ed. by F. Beisser (Stuttgart, 1946), II, p. 61.

52. Rainer Marie Rilke, *Samtliche Werke* (Wiesbaden, 1955), I, p. 717. This translation of part of the "Ninth Elegy" of the *Duino Elegies* is rendered by H. F. Peters in *Rainer Marie Rilke: Masks and the Man* (New York, 1960), p. 171.

53. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, I, p. 358.

54. The question of political nihilism as a distinctive form of nihilism is a difficult one. Aside from the rather anomalous form of attitudinal nihilism epitomized in the character of Bazarov (in Turgenyev's *Fathers and Children*) and the activist nihilism promulgated by numerous groups that use terroristic tactics against various other groups and institutions, the question of a purely political nihilism is difficult to deal with because it is ensnared with a repulsive moral nihilism. In point of fact, it is difficult to discover any political ideology, movement, or system that is wholly nihilistic. For even if a political ideology is willing to use immoral means to attain its goals (and this applies to most extremist political ideologies of any persuasion), its spirit and intention does not entail a negation of the actual world, the negation of all values, the denial of knowledge or truth, or the assertion of the meaningless character of the totality of reality. Of course, we may be able to identify (all too easily) the moral nihilism of a particular political party or group. Thus, a specific political organization may be thoroughly unscrupulous, may not honor its treaties or agreements, and may needlessly and cruelly imprison, torture, or murder countless numbers of noncombatants on the basis of some fanatical political belief or purpose. This does not mean that such sociopolitical organizations are, in themselves, nihilistic; nor does it mean that they consciously will the negation or destruction of all sociopolitical organizations, including their own. To be sure, there is such a politically motivated negativism—e.g., Pisarev's fanatical view that the youth of the Russia of the "sixties" ought to strike out at every existing institution, inflicting destructive blows against such



institutions in order to see which can survive. The Russian nihilists did not have a meaningful political platform, did not have a practical political program or organization that would replace ostensibly "immoral," "decadent," or "outmoded" institutions or organizations. Such groups are not necessarily *theoretical* nihilists, nor are they necessarily *moral* nihilists except in the sense that their passions often lead them to immoral actions against those whom they believe to be their enemies; in this regard their moral consciences are dulled by the fanatical zeal with which they seek to realize their purely negative, destructive aims. What one must condemn in totalitarian forms of political organizations in this century is their gross moral nihilism, their shocking ability to use any means, no matter how nefarious, to achieve their ends. Generally, all political fanatics justify the means they use in terms of grandiose, if not quixotic, conceptions of the ends they seek. In the specific case of terrorists, there is a paradoxical commitment to vicious, immoral actions in the interest of social justice, peace, or revolutionary ideals. Insofar as such groups do have detailed political goals, they are not, strictly speaking, nihilistic. To my mind, the tendency towards the "politicalization" of human life in this century is not, in itself, nihilistic, but is a desperate attempt to overcome a spiritual nihilism that has become so pervasive and oppressive that only the harshest remedies are deemed sufficient to cure the disease. The extremist political movements of our time have not been nihilistic in themselves (despite the moral nihilism of their practice). The political revolutions of the left and the right, which have rocked (and continue to rock) the world, can be seen as fanatical attempts to transcend a psychological and spiritual nihilism that has apparently pervaded the consciousness of many.

A stochastic confluence of the "death" of the Judaeo-Christian *Weltanschauung*, a suspicion of reason, the erosion of the concept of truth, and a weariness with civilization was coeval with the spiritual, moral, and theoretical nihilism of which Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were sensitive enough to be aware before others. Into the spiritual vacuum of the last and present centuries has come a hydraheaded monster—the politics of power and violence—that, many seem to believe, has all the virtues and powers that were once attributed to God.

Nevertheless, a completely self-consistent political nihilism would be self-destructive, would, in fact, have willed its own self-destruction. Needless to say, this is not characteristic of sharply defined political organizations. Though political groups do have an unfortunate capacity for a willing suspension of morality, it is rare to find a political

organization or ideology that has a nihilistic teleology. In this sense, what is often called "political" nihilism usually refers to the moral nihilism—the indifference to promises, treaties, or agreements, to the needs, rights, and lives of human beings—that (alas!) has been all too characteristic of the fanatical political movements of this century.

55. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, I, p. 371.

56. Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (New York, 1955), p. 207.

57. *Solgers nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel*, ed., L. Tieck and F. Raumer (Leipzig, 1826), II, p. 514. Cited in Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*, p. 333.

58. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 341.

59. Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone di pensieri* (Rome, 1955), I, pp. 1071–72.

60. John Keats (in a letter to Woodhouse, October, 1818), cited in M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (New York, 1956), p. xii.

61. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston, 1957), p. 184.

62. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. by W. Lowrie (Princeton, 1957), p. 140.

63. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, I, p. 463.

64. *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, trans. by A. Dru (New York, 1959), vi (1838), p. 41.

65. G.F.W. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. by J. B. Baillie (New York, 1967), p. 249.

66. *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, p. 58.

67. To the kind of question that Nietzsche raises in *The Will to Power* Kierkegaard has a deceptively simple answer. Nietzsche remarks that "the philosophical nihilist is convinced that all that happens is meaningless and in vain; and that there ought not be anything meaningless and in vain. But whence this: there ought not to be? From where does one get this 'meaning,' this standard." *The Will to Power*, trans. by W. Kaufmann, (New York, 1968), 36, p. 23. Kierkegaard would probably have replied: "From one's self."

## Chapter 2

1. William Barrett, *What is Existentialism?* (New York, 1964), pp. 152–54.

2. James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Chicago, 1953), p. 111.

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## Aesthetic Therapy: Hegel and Kierkegaard

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Few thinkers have contributed more to shaping the modern sense of self than the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel and the Danish philosopher-theologian Søren Kierkegaard. In areas as diverse as theology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, literature, and art, the insights originally articulated by Hegel and Kierkegaard have been critically examined, imaginatively elaborated, and eagerly appropriated. Nor has their influence been restricted to that rarefied atmosphere of academic reflection and discussion removed from the confusion and vitality of everyday experience. Hegelian and Kierkegaardian categories permeate our thought and language and condition the way in which many of us understand ourselves and experience our world. Yet despite the lasting importance of the ideas of Hegel and Kierkegaard, the relationship between their contrasting points of view has only rarely been the subject of careful and thorough discussion. As a result of this oversight, many of the most important issues joining and separating Hegel and Kierkegaard continue to go unexamined. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of psychology. Interpreters have tended to appropriate uncritically Kierkegaard's polemical caricature of Hegel as a speculative philosopher who disregards the existing individual. Consequently, the obvious differences separating Hegel and Kierkegaard frequently obscure the more subtle and significant similarities they share. In the following pages, I shall attempt to arrive at an understanding of the common purpose that informs the complex writings of these two demanding authors. My goal is

to bring Hegel and Kierkegaard closer together so that their differences can emerge more clearly.

"What the Age Needs"

In the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel remarks: "Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thought. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age . . ." (p. 11). From Hegel's point of view, forms of reflection, be they naive or scientifically sophisticated, remain inseparably bound to the historical situation within which they arise. Although not readily apparent from his many jibes at the speculative philosopher who has forgotten what it means to be a concrete individual, Kierkegaard heartily agrees with Hegel's recognition of the situatedness of reflection. Throughout his entire authorship, Kierkegaard insists upon the conditional character of all knowing and consistently probes the multiple factors that inform the uniqueness of alternative perspectives. In keeping with their insights, Hegel and Kierkegaard regard their own work as the outgrowth of and the response to dominant intellectual and social tendencies of the day. They both begin with a diagnosis of the philosophical and existential ills of the time and proceed to offer a complex prescription for a supposed cure. More specifically, Hegel and Kierkegaard believe that their respective ages suffer spiritlessness. Each author takes as his fundamental philosophical task the articulation of the means by which the malady of spiritlessness can be overcome.

As M. H. Abrams has pointed out, "No thinker was of greater consequence than Friedrich Schiller in giving a distinctive Romantic formulation to the diagnosis of the modern malaise, to the assumptions about human good and ill which controlled this diagnosis, and to the overall view of the history and destiny of mankind of which the diagnosis was an integral part" (p. 199). For Hegel and his generation, Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) provided a definitive interpretation of the personal

and social problems created by the industrialization and commercialization characteristic of modern society. By drawing on insights garnered from Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race* (1780), Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-85), Kant's *Conjectural Origin of the History of Man* (1785), and from the economic analyses of the Scottish philosopher and sociologist Adam Ferguson,<sup>1</sup> Schiller forges a comprehensive argument in which he maintains that the essential feature of modern experience is its fragmentation. In a world governed by the competitive laws of an industrial economy, class divisions emerge that create inter- and intrapersonal conflict. In a particularly penetrating passage, Schiller describes the genesis and the consequences of the social and personal dis-integration endemic to his age.

That zoophyte character of the Greek States, where every individual enjoyed an independent life and, when need arose, could become a whole in himself, now gave place to an ingenious piece of machinery, in which out of the botching together of a vast number of lifeless parts a collective mechanical life results. State and Church, law and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was separated from labor, means from ends, effort from reward. Eternally chained to only one single little fragment of the whole, Man himself grew to be only a fragment; with the monotonous noise of the wheel he drives everlastingly in his ears, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting humanity upon his nature he becomes merely the imprint of his occupation, of his science. But even the meagre fragmentary association which still links the individual members to the whole, does not depend on forms which present themselves spontaneously . . . , but is assigned to them with scrupulous exactness by a formula in which free intelligence is

1. The most important of Ferguson's works for Schiller was his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767). For discussions of the significance of Ferguson's arguments, see Abrams, pp. 210 ff.; and Roy Pascal, "'Bildung' and the Division of Labor" and "Herder and the Scottish Historical School."

restricted. The lifeless letter takes the place of the living understanding, and a practised memory is a surer guide than genius and feeling. [1965, p. 40]

For the young Hegel, struggling to formulate a distinctive philosophical position, Schiller's analysis of modernity provided an important catalyst to his thinking. In his early writings on religion and politics, Hegel is preoccupied with the exploration of the nature and the origin of the fragmentation and conflict plaguing his age. Through numerous tentative and experimental writings, Hegel identifies four interrelated dimensions of disintegration that he believes to be of particular importance: political, social, religious, and personal. Hegel's deliberate probing of modern society leads him to conclude that the political integration of his native Germany had completely dissolved. "Every center of life has gone its own way and established itself on its own; the whole has fallen apart. The state exists no longer" ("The German Constitution," p. 146). Persisting language of the "German Nation" or the "Empire" reflects an actuality of a bygone age that is belied by extant political conditions of the late eighteenth century. "The old forms have remained," Hegel writes, "but the times have changed, and with them manners, religion, wealth, the situation of all political and civil estates, and the whole condition of the world and Germany. This true condition the old forms do not express; they are divorced from it, they contradict it, and there is no true correspondence between form and fact" (p. 202). With historical changes, vestigial political structures fail to address needs of the time and are experienced as strange and estranging. The forms are maintained only through "superstitious adherence to purely external formalities" (p. 197). Subjective needs and objective sociopolitical forms remain at odds with one another, creating a condition Hegel defines as "alienation."

In large measure, Hegel attributes these problems to a propensity to reify abstract individuality that he believes to be peculiar to the German people. "The German character's stubborn insistence on independence," Hegel maintains, "has reduced to a pure formality everything that might serve towards the erection

of a state-power and the union of society in a state; and to this formality it has clung just as obstinately" (p. 196). Hegel's conclusion is brief and incisive: "In Europe's long oscillation between barbarism and civilization the German state has not completely made the transition to the latter; it has succumbed to the convulsions of this transition; its members have torn themselves apart to complete independence; the state has been dissolved" (p. 237).

This extraordinary distortion of political life at once grows out of and is reflected in the social existence of a people. Rather than reconciling particular interests with the common weal, individuals set themselves in opposition to one another, seeking personal benefit at the expense of others. Hegel recognizes that "once man's social instincts are distorted and he is compelled to throw himself into interests peculiarly his own, his nature becomes so deeply perverted that it now spends its strength on variance from others, and in the course of maintaining its separation it sinks into madness, for madness is simply the complete separation of the individual from his kind" (p. 242). In a different situation, one might expect the forms of a people's religious life to provide a counterbalance to the centrifugal social forces tending toward social disintegration. But Hegel contends that contemporary religious structures themselves reflect and therefore perpetuate human alienation. Instead of expressing a vital religiosity in which there is a consonance between objective forms and subjective experience, the religious life of the German people suffers from abstract formalism devoid of subjective appropriation. Consequently, faith arises only through heteronomous obedience to alien authority.

Always sensitive to the inseparability of self and world, Hegel recognizes the implications of political, social, and religious alienation for individual persons. Outward conflict manifests itself in inward disintegration;<sup>2</sup> political, social, and religious dissolution engender personal fragmentation. Individuals are torn between

2. To be true to the dialectics of Hegel's analysis we must, of course, stress that the converse also obtains—that is, inward conflict manifests itself in outward disintegration.



desire and duty, emotion and reason, subjective inclination and objective obligation, and long for a reconciliation of their sundered selves. From Hegel's perspective, the inward distention of the personality is reflected in the major philosophical and theological movements of the time. Be it Kant's "subjective idealism,"<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher's religious feeling, or Jacobi's intuitionism, the result is the same—the reification of the bifurcation of subjectivity and objectivity that perpetuates conflict within and without. This political, social, religious, and personal fragmentation constitutes the spiritlessness that Hegel sees as the pervasive malady of his age.

In light of this interpretation of modernity, Hegel's attraction to the idealized picture of Greek life elaborated by late eighteenth-century romantics is quite understandable.<sup>4</sup> By contrast to the disintegration of his time, Periclean Athens appeared to represent a harmonious society in which individuals could establish personal integration through participation in political and religious structures that simultaneously embodied individual and common purpose. Hegel's infatuation with Greece, however, never leads to the longing to return to lost Arcadia expressed in the poetry of Hölderlin and Novalis. He is more sympathetic with Schiller's historical interpretation of the modern malaise.<sup>5</sup> Properly comprehended, the disruption of primitive Greek harmony represents a potential advance for the human spirit in which individual selfhood can become clearly differentiated and decisively defined. Hegel's question is not how to retreat to the Garden but how to advance to the Kingdom. For a while, Hegel, like so many of his contemporaries, placed great hope in the French Revolution. But when the ideals of freedom, fraternity, and equality

3. Hegel explains the significance of this term in relation to Kant's philosophy in the *Lesser Logic* (*The Logic of Hegel*, 1968). See pars. 41–45.

4. For helpful considerations of this aspect of Hegel's relation to romanticism, see Glenn Gray, *Hegel's Hellenic Ideal*, and Otto Pöggeler, *Hegel's Kritik der Romantik*. Useful related studies include Jack Forstman, *A Romantic Triangle: Schleiermacher and Early German Romanticism*, and René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950—The Romantic Age*.

5. See, for example, Schiller's sixth letter in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

gave way to the reality of the Reign of Terror, he was forced to reevaluate the means by which the dilemmas faced by his age could be resolved. Philosophical reflection comes to replace sociopolitical reform as the means of overcoming the tensions born of alienation.<sup>6</sup> Writing to Schelling in November of 1800, Hegel comments: "In my scientific development, which began from the more subordinate needs of men, I was bound to be driven on to science, and the ideal of my youth had to be transformed at the same time into reflective form, into a system" (*Briefe*, pp. 59–60). In his early analysis, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, Hegel explains that the "source of the need of philosophy" is "dichotomy" (p. 89), or one might add, opposition, bifurcation, fragmentation. Philosophy meets this need by attempting to mediate oppositions and to reconcile differences in a process of unification that maintains distinction while at the same time resolving conflict. Hegel's Promethean philosophical undertaking cannot be properly understood apart from the recognition of his consistent endeavor to overcome the multiple dimensions of fragmentation that he sees at the heart of alienation.

Writing in 1846, Kierkegaard describes "The Present Age" as essentially a "sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudentially relaxing in indolence" (*Two Ages*, p. 68). In contrast to the "essentially passionate age of revolution," in which individuals had the courage to take decisive action, contemporary man avoids decision and cultivates detachment. This "reflective indolence" is, for Kierkegaard, spiritlessness. The malady is not characterized by a fragmentation that threatens to dismember self and society through the conflict

6. Abrams notes that disappointment with the turn of events in France led many intellectuals to shift the locus of radical change from the sociopolitical arena to the domain of poetry and philosophy. His apt phrase "Apocalypse by Cognition" (pp. 348 ff.) accurately captures the high expectations for revolutionary philosophy and poetry. Left-wing critics of Hegel usually cite this change in his position as a shift to the right that ultimately leads to the reactionary conservatism of his late years in Berlin. Such a reading of Hegel's development, however, oversimplifies his understanding of the proper relation between theory and practice and obscures his view of the nature of philosophical reflection.



of contradictory forces. Quite the contrary—all-powerful reflection seeks to mediate oppositions and to abrogate the principle of contradiction. Rather than creating intolerable tensions within and among persons, bourgeois social institutions attempt “to stabilize human relationships, to establish procedures and patterns of decorum, to protect its members from unexpected contingencies and to enable them to make prudent provision for the future; to modulate the demands and perils of temporal existence so far as possible into an ordered social space” (Crites, 1972a, p. 76). The individual becomes so identified with or integrated within the social totality of which he is a member that all sense of personal uniqueness and self-responsibility is lost. Kierkegaard labels the process by which individuality evaporates in crowd-existence “levelling.” “The dialectic of the present age,” he argues, “is oriented to equality and its most logical implementation, albeit abortive, is levelling [*Nivellementet*], the negative unity of the negative mutual reciprocity of individuals. . . . Anyone can see that levelling has its profound importance in the ascendancy of the category ‘generation’ over the category ‘individuality’” (*Two Ages*, p. 84).

For Kierkegaard, as for Hegel, the spiritlessness that grows out of this levelling has political, social, religious, and personal dimensions. In the realm of politics, public opinion expressed in a thoughtless press holds sway. Individuals become anonymous ciphers for the viewpoints of others and personal action is transmuted into impersonal spectating. As the power of the crowd waxes, the strength of the individual wanes. In this situation, a possible revitalization of social life offers no remedy for spiritlessness. In fact, Kierkegaard holds that “The idolized principle of sociality in our age is the consuming, demoralizing principle, which in the thralldom of reflection transforms even virtues into *vitia splendida*” (p. 86). At another point, he develops this crucial insight: “In our age the principle of association . . . is not affirmative but negative; it is an evasion, a dissipation, an illusion, whose dialectic is as follows: as it strengthens individuals, it vitiates them; it strengthens by numbers, by sticking together, but from the

ethical point of view this is a weakening” (p. 106). The religious faith of the nineteenth century simply exacerbates the spiritlessness of the age by obscuring decisive distinctions between the sacred and profane and by identifying religious commitment with participation in a banal form of cultural Protestantism. When everyone is supposed to be a Christian by virtue of birth into an ostensibly Christian world, the tensions distinctively characteristic of a genuine historical career are dissipated and individuals are tranquilized into a false and a dangerous sense of security.

Kierkegaard maintains that the most important consequence of political, social, and religious developments in the modern age is the pervasive loss of authentic individual selfhood. Indeed from Kierkegaard’s perspective

the single individual . . . has not fomented enough passion in himself to tear himself out of the web of reflection and the seductive ambiguity of reflection. The environment, the contemporary age, has neither events nor integrated passion but in a negative way creates a reflective opposition which toys for a moment with the unreal prospect and then resorts to the brilliant equivocation that the smartest thing has been done, after all, by doing nothing. [*Two Ages*, p. 69]

Through such enervating reflection, one becomes, quite literally, “nobody.”

The dissipation of individual selfhood is reflected in the chief philosophical and theological movement of the time—Hegelianism. According to Kierkegaard, Hegelian reason “is the abrogation of the passionate disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity” (*Two Ages*, p. 103).<sup>7</sup> But, Kierkegaard adds with a note of irony, the “existential expression” of the abrogation of such decisive contradictions “is to be in contradiction” (p. 97). This

7. In translating this passage, Hong renders “at raisonere” as “to be loquacious.” He points out that although the term can be translated “to reason,” Kierkegaard’s intention is better conveyed by “to be loquacious.” In the present context, however, the use of “to reason” more accurately represents the critique of Hegel and Hegelianism implicit in Kierkegaard’s remarks.



existential contradiction is the result of the individual's failure to become himself—a consequence of his self-alienation. Kierkegaard contends that what the age needs is the reintroduction of the distinctions, contrasts, and antitheses ingredient in temporal existence and requisite for the emergence of genuine individuality. Kierkegaard's literary-philosophical effort is directed to creating the possibility of overcoming the dissipation he believes to be characteristic of alienation.

It becomes apparent, then, that the complex works of Hegel and Kierkegaard are intended to serve as remedies for what they both regard as the malady of the age—spiritlessness—the sickness unto death. My analysis suggests, however, that this common diagnosis masks conflicting interpretations of the nature of the illness. Hegel insists that modern man faces the difficult task of finding his way from fragmentation and disintegration among and within individuals to a harmonious inter- and intrapersonal unification or integration. Kierkegaard concludes that the way to selfhood in nineteenth-century Europe requires the negation of the dissipation of concrete existence that results from the thoroughgoing identification of the individual with the sociocultural milieu, and that such differentiation requires a long process of distinguishing person and world. While Hegel calls for a movement from the oppositional differentiation to the reconciliation of self and other, or subject and object, Kierkegaard stresses the importance of advancing from the nondifferentiation to the differentiation of self and other, or subject and object. Nevertheless, for both the question becomes, How can spiritlessness be cured? How can the movement, development, advance, necessary for the realization of spirit be facilitated?

After considerable deliberation, Hegel and Kierkegaard arrive at the conclusion that what the age most needs is an "Aesthetic Education." Reflecting the continuing influence of Schiller, Hegel writes: "The philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet. Men without aesthetic sense is what the philosophers-of-the-letter of our times are. The philosophy of spirit is an aesthetic philosophy. . . . Poetry gains thereby a higher dignity, she becomes at the end once more, what she was in the

beginning—the *teacher of humanity*."<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard suggests his own sense of mission when he explains: "I am the last stage of the development of a poet in the direction of a small-scale reformer. I have much more imagination than a reformer as such would have, but then again less of a certain personal force required for acting as a reformer" (*Journals*, no. 6061).

In fine, both Hegel and Kierkegaard assume the role of educator—teachers of humanity whose writings are informed by a pedagogical intent.<sup>9</sup> Their diverse philosophical and theological works share the aim of leading individuals of their day from (*e-ducare*) spiritlessness to spirit. The alpha and the omega of this journey can be expressed in different terms. Hegel and Kierkegaard try to enable their readers to move from inauthenticity to authenticity, from immediacy to immediacy after reflection, from bondage to freedom, from abstract to concrete individuality. Moreover, the pedagogical methods employed in this aesthetic education are remarkably akin to one another. Hegel and Kierkegaard develop alternative phenomenologies of spirit that seek to lead the reader from inauthentic to authentic selfhood. While Hegel undertakes this task explicitly in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Kierkegaard unfolds his analysis in a series of pseudonymous writings composed over a period of years.

The methodological procedures of the authors share signifi-

8. "Earliest System-Programme of German Idealism," included in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development Toward the Sunlight, 1770-1801*, p. 511. Although the authorship of this fragment has been the subject of lively scholarly debate over the years, evidence now strongly supports analysts who argue that Hegel penned the work. For a convenient summary of this discussion, see Harris, pp. 249-57.

9. In his detailed reconstruction of Hegel's early years, Harris argues that "the ambition to be a *Volkserzieher*" (p. xix) provides a focus around which to organize Hegel's otherwise disparate youthful philosophical wanderings. Although Harris' study is generally quite helpful and most insightful, his effort to view all of Hegel's work prior to 1801 from the perspective of his intention to become a *Volkserzieher* distorts important aspects of his development and creates needless interpretive problems. Harris' recognition of the importance of this ideal of Hegel's is correct but need not be pursued with such relentlessness to be persuasive. For a suggestive discussion of Kierkegaard's pedagogical preoccupations, see Ronald J. Manheimer, *Kierkegaard as Educator*.

cant features. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship develop detailed analyses of various forms of spirit, shapes of consciousness, types of selfhood, or forms of existence. Moreover, the contrasting spiritual configurations are presented in a dialectical progression that advances from less to more complete forms of life. Since the *telos* of the journey described by Hegel and Kierkegaard is free concrete individuality, they must proceed in a way that does not violate the integrity and autonomy of the learner. Their teaching method must be subtly Socratic rather than crudely authoritarian. Most important, they must begin at the point reached by their pupils and then lead them step by step through the stages from bondage and error to freedom and truth. The works call each reader to "self-examination" and demand that he "judge for himself" the form of life he incarnates. Undertaking this educational journey exacts a price. Hegel claims that the decision to philosophize is always accompanied by "dread." Critical reflection discloses old certainties to be untenable illusions. Perplexed and bewildered, the voyager tosses and turns in a sea of doubt and despair. In fact, Hegel and Kierkegaard contend that every station along the way to the final destination remains a form of inauthentic existence that must be labeled "despair." They admit that their pedagogy leads the pupil along a painful "highway of despair" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 49). "The life of Spirit," Hegel writes, "is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself" (p. 19). The suffering of dismemberment, however, occasions the cure of the sickness unto death. Though the highway of despair constitutes a dark night of the soul, the completion of the journey holds the promise of realized selfhood.

When understood in this way, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship appear to be *Bildungsromanen* that chart the circuitous process of self-formation.<sup>10</sup> In this context, it is important to distinguish three

10. Other authors who have recognized the similarity between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and the genre of *Bildungsroman* include Abrams, pp. 225-37; Jean

different narrative strands woven together in each *Bildungsgeschichte*. In the first place, Hegel's and Kierkegaard's works are quasi-autobiographical; they summarize the phases through which they have passed in their personal development. Hegel describes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as his "voyage of discovery," and Kierkegaard confesses, "My writing is essentially my own development . . ." (*Journals*, no. 6390). Secondly, each phenomenology of spirit recapitulates the stages of world development.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the different forms of spirit depicted by Hegel and Kierkegaard describe the stages that must be traversed by the reader if he is to reach the goal of genuine individuality. Hegel and Kierkegaard see this third aspect of the *Bildungsgeschichte* as essential, for it most faithfully expresses the pedagogical intention of their work. Their phenomenologies are *Bildungsromanen* that encourage the reader to educate himself—to cultivate himself, to emerge from spiritlessness and to rise to spiritual existence. The dramas unfolded never lose sight of the audience to which they are directed. If their works fail to evoke an appropriate response, Hegel and Kierkegaard are forced to regard their efforts as utter failures. It is now necessary to turn our attention to a more detailed analysis of the precise educational methods employed by Hegel and Kierkegaard.

### Theoria

In his introduction, Hegel describes his *Phenomenology* as "the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge; or as the way of the Soul which journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were the stations

Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 11-12; Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, pp. 147 ff. Also see W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: From Humboldt to Thomas Mann*. The only author who has suggested a connection between Kierkegaard's works and the *Bildungsroman* tradition is Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*, pp. 273 ff. Compare Aage Henriksen, *Kierkegaards Romaner*.

11. For support of this reading of Kierkegaard's stages, see Mark C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self*, pp. 64 ff.; and Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Way to the Truth*, pp. 25 ff., 64 ff.; and *Frihends Problem I Kierkegaards Begrebet Angest*, esp. chap. 2.



appointed for it by its own nature, so that it may purify itself for the life of the Spirit, and achieve finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself" (*Phenomenology*, p. 49).<sup>12</sup> The book attempts to provide its reader with a "ladder" (p. 17)<sup>13</sup> by the means of which one ascends to the scientific perspective from which spirit can grasp its own actuality. As I have suggested, Hegel believes the journey from inauthenticity to authenticity to have both universal or generic and individual or personal dimensions. "The task of leading the individual from his uneducated standpoint [*ungebildeten standpunkte*] to knowledge," Hegel maintains, "had to be seen in its universal sense, just as it was the universal individual, self-conscious Spirit whose formative education [*Bildung*] had to be studied" (ibid., p. 16). Hegel proceeds to argue that "the single individual must also pass through the formative stages [*Bildungsstufen*] of universal Spirit so far as their content is concerned, but as shapes which Spirit has already left behind, as stages on a way that has been made level with toil" (p. 16). As the analysis unfolds, it becomes apparent that the education of universal and individual spirit, in fact, forms two aspects of a single pedagogical process.

This past experience is the already acquired property of universal Spirit which constitutes the Substance of the individual, and hence appears externally to him as his inorganic nature. In this respect formative education, regarded from the side of the individual, consists in his acquiring what thus lies at hand, devouring his inorganic nature, and taking pos-

12. Hegel's undertaking is not without historical precedent. As Werner Marx points out in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, in both Fichte and Schelling, "we find the idea of a genetic presentation of the build-up of self-consciousness in its various capacities, conceived as a 'sequence of reflection,' in which consciousness increasingly improves in self-discernment" (p. xvii). See Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* and *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* and Schelling's *Essays to Explain the Idealism of the Wissenschaftslehre* and *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Abrams suggests similarities between Hegel's undertaking in the *Phenomenology* and Wordsworth's purpose in writing *The Prelude* (Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 71 ff.).

13. The image of the ladder points to an interesting parallel with Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes Climacus.

session of it for himself. But, as regarded from the side of universal Spirit as substance, this is nothing but its own acquisition of self-consciousness, the bringing-about of its own becoming and reflection into itself. [pp. 16-17]

The point of departure for Hegel's educational journey is "the standpoint of consciousness which knows objects in their antithesis to itself, and itself in antithesis to them" (p. 15). Put differently, Hegel begins with a situation in which self and other are sundered; the individual subject sets himself over against an alien object that he then attempts to grasp. "Knowledge in its first phase, or *immediate Spirit*," Hegel asserts, "is spiritlessness [*das Geistlose*]" (p. 15). The arduous "initiation of the unscientific consciousness into Science" (p. 16) or the actualization of spirit involves the sublation of this opposition through the incremental reconciliation of subjectivity and objectivity. The goal of this voyage of discovery is the mediation of self and other that involves "pure self-recognition in absolute otherness" (p. 14). Hegel expresses the final insight toward which he leads his pupils in more technical language when he writes: "The spiritual alone is the *actual*; it is essence, or that which has *being in itself*; it is that which *relates itself to itself* and is *determinate*, it is *other-being* [*Anderssein*] and *being-for-self*, and in this determinateness, or in its self-externality, abides with itself; in other words, it is *in and for itself*" (p. 14). The multiple dimensions of this reconciliation of self and other, or of subject and object, eventuate in a unification that Hegel sees as overcoming the fragmentation and disintegration endemic to alienation. The dialectical integration of subjectivity and objectivity negates heteronomous determination by alien otherness and realizes authentic self-relation that is mediated by relation to other. This, for Hegel, is the freedom unique to concrete individuality.

The very nature of the end toward which his analysis is directed creates a methodological dilemma for Hegel. In order to lead the reader from inauthentic to authentic existence, it would seem necessary to employ a criterion by which to judge inadequate forms of life and through which to arrange competing structures

of consciousness in a progressive sequence. And yet, if the point of the educational journey is the emergence of free autonomous selfhood, no criterion can be externally imposed in a heteronomous manner. Hegel solves this problem by arguing that every form of consciousness provides itself with a standard by which to measure itself, and hence need not be subjected to an alien criterion. Consciousness distinguishes itself from its object, which it takes to exist independent of the cognitive relationship. The self-subsistent object is the criterion by which consciousness judges itself.

In consciousness one thing exists *for* another, i.e., consciousness regularly contains the determinateness of the moment of knowledge; at the same time, this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but is also outside of this relationship, or exists *in itself*: the moment of truth. Thus in what consciousness affirms from within itself as *being-in-itself* or the *True* we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up by which to measure what it knows. If we designate *knowledge* as the Notion, but the essence or the *True* as what exists, or the *object*, then the examination consists in seeing whether the Notion corresponds to the object. But if we call the *essence* or *in-itself* of the *object* the *Notion*, and on the other hand understand by the *object* the Notion itself as *object*, viz. as it exists *for an other*, then the examination consists in seeing whether the object corresponds to its Notion. It is evident, of course, that these two procedures are the same. [*Phenomenology*, p. 53]

Should consciousness' comparison of itself with its standard yield a negative conclusion concerning the correspondence of subjectivity and objectivity, consciousness is forced to change itself in order more adequately to grasp its object. But, Hegel argues, "in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for it [i.e., consciousness] too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what it previously took to be the *in-itself* is not an *in-itself*, or that it was only an

in-itself for consciousness" (p. 54). Consequently, consciousness is doubly confounded: subjective certainty becomes doubtful, and what had been seen as an objective norm now seems to have been a subjective appearance [*Schein*]. The apprehension of the illusory character of its criterion is inseparable from consciousness' recognition of a new standard of evaluation. From the viewpoint of consciousness itself, this new norm is encountered as a novel object whose origin is unknown (p. 54)<sup>14</sup> but that beckons consciousness to attempt to grasp it. This situation, of course, constitutes the occasion for further dialectical development.

It is necessary to stress that Hegel regards the critique of consciousness by which it progresses from less to more adequate forms as "immanent." Consciousness engages in a protracted dialogue with itself in which it subjects itself to constant questioning, revision, and reform. Hegel makes this point graphically when he writes, "Thus consciousness suffers this violence at its own hands; it spoils its own limited satisfaction" (p. 51). The conviction that consciousness engages in immanent self-criticism forms an essential presupposition of Hegel's phenomenological method. In a crucial passage, Hegel explains that "not only is a contribution by us superfluous, since Notion and object, the criterion and what is to be tested, are present in consciousness itself, but we are also spared the trouble of comparing the two and really *testing* them, so that, since what consciousness examines is its own self, all that is left for us to do is simply to look on" (p. 54). In other words, Hegel conceives his task as basically *descriptive*.<sup>15</sup> He attempts to represent accurately the stages through which consciousness, by its own internal dialectic, progresses. Rather than arbitrarily instructing consciousness in the errors of its ways, the

14. Hegel explains: "But it is just this necessity itself, or the *origination* of the new object, that presents itself to consciousness without its understanding how this happens, which proceeds for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness" (p. 56).

15. This reading of Hegel's phenomenological method is developed insightfully and persuasively by Kenley Dove. See "Hegel's Phenomenological Method," and "Toward an Interpretation of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," esp. chaps. 2-3.

phenomenologist must sink his "freedom in the content, letting it move spontaneously of its own nature, by the self as its own self, and then contemplate this movement" (*Phenomenology*, p. 36). From this perspective, Hegel's method is radically empirical.<sup>16</sup> He immerses himself in the observed perspective as completely as possible in order to describe it from within in a way that simultaneously fathoms its inherent principles and discerns its latent contradictions. Interestingly enough, this empiricism is at the same time theoretical and speculative. Hegel assumes the stance of a spectator who observes and records the drama unfolding before him. Thus, the education he attempts to provide the reader is, properly speaking, "aesthetic." As Stephen Crites points out, "aesthetic" derives from the Greek verb αἰσθάνομαι, which in its most comprehensive sense means "to observe" and is the etymological root of both "theory" and "theatre."<sup>17</sup> Hegel offers his narrative account of the drama of human consciousness for the reader's contemplation in the hope that the observation of the spectacle will provide an aesthetic education that is cathartic.

Hegel's educational method, therefore, involves an essential distinction between observed and observing consciousness. Hegel is no mere chronicler of consciousness' own experience as it moves from standpoint to standpoint. His narrative perspective affords him an angle of vision not immediately accessible to the form of life he is describing. Having grasped the overall plot of the drama he recounts, Hegel understands the experiences of the actors better than the players themselves. He does not suffer Oedipus's tragic blindness. This comprehensive vision enables Hegel to be the educator who can serve as the reader's guide. Throughout the narrative, Hegel communicates directly with his reader in an effort to provide a map for the dangerous journey along the highway of despair. His method for offering such guidance is the employment of a device we might label "the

16. George Schrader offers an illuminating discussion of the contrast between Hegelian and British empiricism in "Hegel's Contribution to Phenomenology."

17. Stephen Crites, "Introduction," to Kierkegaard's *Crisis in the Life of an Actress and Other Essays on Drama*. Compare W. Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, p. 164.

phenomenological we."<sup>18</sup> The repeated remarks reflecting the viewpoint of "us" or of the "we" interspersed throughout the text of the *Phenomenology* are intended to help the reader to anticipate the peripeteiae and to avoid the pitfalls to which observed consciousness inevitably succumbs.

But Hegel's direct identification with the reader through the device of the "we" should not obscure the significant difference between the points of view of instructor and pupil. As observing consciousness, both author (i.e., Hegel) and reader are distinguished from observed consciousness. Nevertheless Hegel's perspective and that of the reader are not identical; they differ as does the initiator from the initiate. The reader occupies a position suspended between the forms of life examined and the comprehensive vision of his instructor—he "hovers between the viewing and the viewed standpoints" (Fackenheim, p. 36). Habermas correctly points out that "the phenomenologist's perspective, from which the path of knowledge in its manifestations presents itself 'for us,' can only be adopted in anticipation until this perspective itself is produced in phenomenological experience. 'We,' too, are drawn into the process of reflection, which at each of its levels is characterized anew by a 'reversal of consciousness'" (Habermas, p. 17). Hegel's pedagogy involves a triplicity of consciousness: the consciousness of the instructor, of the instructed, and of the object of instruction.<sup>19</sup>

Having established the distinction between the perspectives of

18. Hegel's use of the "we" throughout the *Phenomenology* has received considerable attention in the secondary literature. See, for example, Dove (1965), chap. 2; John Findlay, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, pp. 87 ff.; Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, pp. 173 ff.; Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, pp. 3 ff.; R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 2: 369 ff.; G. Lukacs, *Der junge Hegel: Über die Beziehungen von Dialektik und Ökonomie*, pp. 602 ff.; Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, p. 94. None of these authors, however, adequately distinguishes the "we" of the author from the "we" of the reader.

19. The emphasis on the triplicity of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* distinguishes this line of analysis from an interpretation such as that of Abrams (pp. 225 ff.), in which consciousness is seen as merely double. If the threefold distinction is allowed to slip into simple duality, Hegel's pedagogical purpose becomes overshadowed by autobiographical preoccupations.

teacher and student *within* observing consciousness, we are in a position to analyze the precise way in which Hegel distinguishes viewing and viewed consciousness. The basis of the difference between these two forms of awareness lies in the nature of their respective objects. We have seen that observed consciousness sees itself involved in an effort to establish knowledge by relating to an object that it takes to be both independent of consciousness and true in itself. Since this very knowledge is the object of observing consciousness, observed consciousness' contrast between subject and object, being-for-consciousness and being-in-itself, now is seen as a distinction that falls *within* consciousness. The criterion that consciousness encounters as external and imposed upon itself is, for the phenomenologist, immanent in consciousness itself. In other words, "consciousness provides its own criterion within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness itself" (*Phenomenology*, p. 53). Hegel stresses that "the essential point to bear in mind throughout the whole investigation is that these two moments, 'Notion' and 'object,' 'being-for-another' and 'being-in-itself,' both fall *within* that knowledge which we are investigating" (p. 53). This insight proves to be central to Hegel's argument.

We have noted that consciousness apprehends the progressive experience it undergoes as resulting from a series of contingent encounters with different external objects. Hegel contends that the reflective description of the experience of consciousness sublates both the externality of subject and object and the contingency of the stages of development from error to truth. The empathetic identification with other forms of consciousness discloses the inherent contradictions that lead to the self-negation of every particular viewpoint. Each perspective is internally related to its opposite in such a way that it bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Hegel argues, however, that dissolution is at the same time resolution. The new object encountered by consciousness is not a creation *de novo*, but is the result of consciousness' own negation of its prior object.

Consciousness knows *something*; this object is the essence of the *in-itself*; but it is also for consciousness the *in-itself*. . . .

We see that consciousness now has two objects: one is the first *in-itself*, the second is the *being-for-consciousness of this in-itself*. The latter appears at first sight to be merely the reflection of consciousness into itself, i.e., what consciousness has in mind is not an object, but only its knowledge of that first object. But . . . the first object, in being known, is altered for consciousness; it ceases to be the *in-itself*, and becomes something that is the *in-itself only for consciousness*. And this then is the True: the being-for-consciousness of this *in-itself*. Or, in other words, this is the *essence*, or the *object* of consciousness. This new object contains the nothingness of the first, it is what experience has made of it. [*ibid.*, p. 55]

The sequence of experiences undergone by consciousness is generated by a continual process that Hegel calls "determinate negation." The distinguishing characteristic of any particular object is mediated by the specificity of the object through whose negation it arises. Since each object harbors a necessary relation to its antithesis, the progressive unfolding of the experience of consciousness is not arbitrary and inflicted in an external manner but grows out of a necessary process of immanent dialectical development. The stages through which spirit passes in moving toward its full realization form a necessary progression in which beginning and end are implicitly identical.<sup>20</sup> In itself, spiritlessness is spirit; of itself, inauthentic selfhood advances to authentic individuality. The apprehension of the necessity of this dialectical progression is the lesson taught by the reader's phenomenological guide. Hegel summarizes:

Our account implied that our knowledge of the first object, or the being-for-consciousness of the first *in-itself*, itself becomes the second object. It usually seems to be the case, on the contrary, that our experience of the untruth of our first

20. Hegel points out: "Because of this necessity, the way to Science, is itself already Science, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*" (*Phenomenology*, p. 56). In recent years, the question of relationship between the *Phenomenology* and Hegel's mature system has provoked heated debate among German commentators. The best discussion of the problem is Friedrich Fulda's *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*.



notion comes by way of a second object which we come upon by chance and externally, so that our part in all this is simply the pure *apprehension* of what is in and for itself. From the present viewpoint, however, the new object shows itself to have come about through a *reversal of consciousness itself*. This way of looking at the matter is something contributed by us, by means of which the succession of experiences through which consciousness passes is raised into a scientific progression—but it is not known to the consciousness that we are observing. [*Phenomenology*, pp. 55–56]

Despite his persistent pedagogical purpose, Hegel, in one sense, has nothing to teach his pupil. His method of educating is Socratic to the extent that it seeks to render the implicit explicit. As Hyppolite observes, "The rise of empirical consciousness to absolute knowledge is possible only if the necessary stages of its ascent are discovered within it. These stages are still within it; all that is needed is that it descend into the interiority of memory by an action comparable to Platonic recollection" (1974, p. 39). Through the process of recollection (*Er-innerung*), the individual who follows Hegel's guidance internalizes or appropriates as his own the stages necessary for full self-realization. Prior to this inwardization, the phases of spirit's cultivation remain external to one another in outward temporal dispersion (*Entäusserung*). Recollection renders spirit transparent to itself and brings a fulfillment that "consists in perfectly *knowing* what *it is*, in knowing its substance" (*Phenomenology*, p. 492).<sup>21</sup> The journey Hegel invites his reader to undertake turns out to be a voyage of *self-discovery* whose destination is spirit's adequate comprehension of the actuality it has become.

#### Poiesis

Our consideration of Kierkegaard's analysis of his age has disclosed that he holds spiritlessness to arise from the dissipation of

21. For the twentieth-century reader, Hegel's recognition of the therapeutic value of recollection suggests interesting parallels with Freud's psychoanalytic method. Consider Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, and Hyppolite, "Hegel's Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis."

individual selfhood created by abstract reflection. When reflection obscures vital distinctions and "dispels the urge to decision," the individual becomes absent to himself—a mere "spectator" of his own life, devoid of the passionate "inwardness" constitutive of genuine individuality (*Two Ages*, pp. 76, 81, 80). Kierkegaard is not suggesting a thoroughgoing condemnation of all reflection. To the contrary, responsible deliberation is a presupposition of free selfhood. But when carried to extremes, reflection can paralyze decisive action. "Reflection is not the evil," Kierkegaard insists, "but a standing state of reflection and a standstill in reflection are the fraud and the corruption, which by transforming the conditions for action into means of escape lead to dissipation" (p. 96). Although he acknowledges that "beyond a doubt there is no task and effort more difficult than to extricate oneself from the temptations of reflection" (p. 77), Kierkegaard believes that precisely such an undertaking is required to overcome the spiritless dissipation of his day. The purpose of Kierkegaard's diverse writings is to engender inwardness by making people aware of the depths to which they have fallen and by creating the possibility for them to begin the journey from despair to realized selfhood. Since he is convinced that "rescue comes only through the essentiality of the religious in the single individual" (p. 88), Kierkegaard's works have from the outset a religious orientation. More specifically, Kierkegaard's belief that concrete individuality can be fully actualized only through Christian existence leads him to conclude in *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (posthumous) that the sole antidote to spiritlessness is the clarification of "how to become a Christian" (p. 13). He explains: "The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian,' with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort" (pp. 5–6).

Paradoxically, however, Kierkegaard could combat the pathological reflection of his age only reflectively. "My task," he writes, "was to cast Christianity into reflection, not poetically to idealize it (for the essentially Christian, after all, is itself the ideal)

but with poetic fervor to present the total ideality at its most ideal—always ending with: I am not that, but I strive" (*Journals*, no. 6511). An aesthetic age calls for an aesthetic education. Kierkegaard, like Hegel, could not accomplish his end by attempting to force his viewpoint on others. His understanding of the nature of free selfhood requires him to employ a method that constantly respects the integrity of the individual. Consequently, in a manner similar to Hegel, Kierkegaard decides that spiritlessness can be overcome most effectively by the depiction of alternative forms of life that provide the reader the occasion for self-examination and self-judgment. The various personae of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship comprise the cast of characters through which the dramatic struggle toward authentic selfhood is acted out.

Each pseudonym represents a particular shape of consciousness, form of life, type of selfhood. In order to present every standpoint as completely and as accurately as possible, Kierkegaard, like Hegel, withdraws and allows each persona to speak for itself. In the course of the ensuing dialogue, the characters uncover the unique contours, nagging tensions, and destructive contradictions of their different perspectives. Taken together, the pseudonyms present a coherent account of what amounts to a phenomenology of spirit analogous, though alternative, to the course plotted by Hegel. The Kierkegaardian forms of life are arranged as dialectical stages in a progressive movement toward genuine individuality. As educator, Kierkegaard hopes to enable the reader to achieve more adequate self-knowledge and to provide the occasion for the reader's movement from spiritlessness to spirit. In intention and execution, therefore, there are significant parallels between the philosophical and theological projects of Hegel and Kierkegaard.

Despite these noteworthy similarities, equally essential differences distinguish their works. Most important in this context, Kierkegaard's pseudonyms do not represent descriptions of the stages through which consciousness *has passed* in the process of its actualization. The various personae are imaginative projections of existential possibilities that *might be realized* in the course of

becoming an authentic individual. In place of Hegel's theoretical description of spirit's actuality, Kierkegaard creates poeticized possibilities that confront the sojourner along life's way. *Poiesis*, not *theoria*, is Kierkegaard's element. To understand more adequately the distinctive features of Kierkegaard's aesthetic education, we must consider his interpretation of the person of the poet and the nature of the poetic work of art.<sup>22</sup>

We have already noted that Kierkegaard regards himself as "essentially a poet" (*Journals*, no. 6383). In the following *Journal* entry, he identifies the distinguishing characteristic of a poet: "What is it to be a poet? It is to have one's own personal life, one's actuality in categories completely different from those of one's poetic production, to be related to the ideal only in imagination, so that one's personal life is more or less a satire on the poetry and on oneself" (no. 6300). Put differently, the poet's thought and being, word and deed, ideality and reality, do not coincide, but contradict one another. Since he sees his "purely ideal task" as involving "casting Christianity completely and wholly into reflection" (no. 6237), Kierkegaard ever insists that he is not a Christian. The denial of the poet masks a definite pedagogical strategy.

[If] it is an illusion that all are Christians—and if there is anything to be done about it, it must be done indirectly, not by one who vociferously proclaims himself an extraordinary Christian, but by one who, better instructed, is ready to declare that he is not a Christian at all. That is, one must approach from behind the person who is under an illusion. Instead of wishing to have an advantage of being oneself that rare thing, a Christian, one must let the prospective captive enjoy the advantage of being the Christian, and for one's own part have resignation enough to be the one who is far behind—otherwise one will certainly not get the man out of his illusion, a thing which is difficult enough in any case. [*Point of View*, pp. 24–25]

22. In his excellent study *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*, Mackey also stresses the importance of Kierkegaard's understanding of poetry and the poet. See esp. chap. 6.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of the poet represents his version of the principle of Socratic ignorance. In fact, Kierkegaard's educational technique is thoroughly informed by his appropriation of the central features of Socratic method. While Kierkegaard's understanding of Socrates is profoundly influenced by Hegel's consideration of Socrates' viewpoint, his criticisms of Hegel's analysis point to crucial differences between their methodological commitments. Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socrates consists of a radicalization of Hegel's insights. Here as elsewhere, Kierkegaard assumes Hegel's perspective in order to negate it.<sup>23</sup> Kierkegaard admits that Hegel correctly identifies the essence of the Socratic position as irony. Moreover, he agrees with Hegel's definition of irony as "infinite absolute negativity" (*Concept of Irony*, p. 287). Hegel's error lay in his failure to carry through his insight with sufficient rigor. Rather than allowing Socrates to remain "infinitely negative," Hegel urges him toward a positive resolution of the dilemmas he discovers. Consequently, irony becomes a "mastered moment"; negativity ceases to be a perduring perspective and is itself negated by the "higher" positivity it is supposed to generate.

In an important passage in his magister dissertation, Kierkegaard distinguishes his reading of Socrates from that of Hegel.<sup>24</sup>

It is towards this point of exhibiting Socrates as the founder of morality that Hegel unilaterally allows his conception of Socrates to gravitate. It is the Idea of the good that he seeks to claim for Socrates, but this causes him some embarrassment when he attempts to show how Socrates has conceived the good. It is essentially here that the difficulty with Hegel's

23. This line of analysis opposes those authors who maintain that in *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard is fundamentally a Hegelian. See, for example, Vilhelm Andersen, *Tider og Typer af Dansk Aands*, part 2, 2:65-108; and Harold Høffding, *Søren Kierkegaard som Filosof*.

24. For helpful discussions of the differences between Hegel's and Kierkegaard's views of Socrates, see Robert L. Perkins, "Hegel and Kierkegaard: Two Critics of Romantic Irony" and "Two Nineteenth-Century Interpretations of Socrates: Hegel and Kierkegaard."

conception of Socrates lies, namely the attempt is constantly made to show how Socrates has conceived the good. But what is even worse, so it seems to me, is that the direction of the current in Socrates' life is not faithfully maintained. The movement in Socrates is to come to the good. His significance for the development of the world is to arrive at this (not at one point to have arrived at this). His significance for his contemporaries is that they arrived at this. Now this does not mean that he arrived at this toward the end of his life, as it were, but that his life was constantly to come to this and to cause others to do the same. . . . He did not do this once and for all, but he did this with every individual. He began wherever the individual might find himself, and soon he was thoroughly involved in issuing clearance papers for each one of them. But as soon as he had ferried one of them over he immediately turned back for another. No actuality could withstand him, yet that which became visible was ideality in the most fleeting suggestion of its faintest configuration, that is, as infinitely abstract. . . . Socrates ferried the individual from reality over to ideality, and ideal infinity, as infinite negativity, became the nothingness into which he made the whole manifold of reality disappear. . . . Actuality, by means of the absolute, became nothingness, but the absolute was in turn nothingness. In order to be able to maintain Socrates at this point, in order never to forget that the content of his life was to undertake this movement at every moment, one must bear in mind his significance as a divine missionary. Yet this has been ignored by Hegel, although Socrates himself places much emphasis upon it. [*Irony*, pp. 254-55]

According to Kierkegaard, Hegel does not adequately distinguish Socrates' existential and Plato's speculative dialectic. Therefore, at Hegel's hands, Socratic questioning and irresolution become speculative answering and resolution. "One may ask a question," Kierkegaard points out, "for the purpose of obtaining an answer containing the desired content, so that the more one questions, the deeper and more meaningful becomes the answer; or

one may ask a question not in the interest of obtaining an answer, but to suck out the apparent content with a question and leave only an emptiness remaining. The first method naturally presupposes a content, the second an emptiness; the first is the speculative, the second the ironic. Now it was the latter method which was especially practised by Socrates" (ibid., p. 73).

To correct the errors into which Hegel's interpretation falls, one need simply return to the Hegelian notion of "infinite absolute negativity" and apply it consistently to the person and position of Socrates. For Kierkegaard, Socrates' standpoint is "exclusively ironic" (ibid., p. 232). He never allows negativity to give way to a "higher" positivity; the disquiet of ignorance always fails to win the peace of knowledge. "The reason Socrates could content himself with this ignorance was because he had no deeper speculative need. Instead of pacifying this negativity speculatively, he pacified it far more through the eternal unrest wherein he repeated the same process with each particular individual" (p. 201). Unlike the systematic philosopher, the Socratic educator offers no results. Question marks and not periods punctuate his dialogue.

The attraction Socrates exercises over Kierkegaard becomes more understandable when we recall that he sees the spiritlessness of modernity as arising from the complete identification of the individual with his sociocultural milieu. Kierkegaard maintains that the entire point of Socratic questioning is to raise "the individual out of immediate existence" (p. 85), or to precipitate the differentiation between self and social totality. "By means of his questions," Socrates "sawed through the virgin forest of substantial consciousness in all quietude, and when everything was ready, all these formations suddenly disappeared and his mind's eye enjoyed a prospect such as it had never before seen" (p. 215). This prospect is nothing less than the free individual that Socrates' "art of midwifery" seeks to bring to birth. Such a birth is possible, however, only if "the umbilical cord of substantiality" (p. 215) is severed. Kierkegaard contends that Socratic midwifery involves a justified deception intended to dispel the interlocutor's illusions. The ignorance resulting from this dis-illusionment

forms "the nothingness from which a beginning must be made" (p. 222). Poetic and ironic dissimulation is never without pedagogical purpose, for it attempts "to mystify the surrounding world not so much in order to conceal itself as to induce others to reveal themselves" (p. 268). To understand the nature of this evoked self-revelation, we must turn our attention from the person of the poet to the nature of the poem. As Mackey points out:

The speech of a poet does not utter his inner states, but rather builds meanings into a free-standing structure of language. Paradox, self-concealment, plural connotations, distortions of metaphor and the like are the shears by which he clips the umbilical of his fancy's child and sends it out on its own. His art is not the externalizing of himself, but the objectifying of a work of words: *poiesis*. What the poet produces is a verbal object (*poiema*) in which meanings, released from any personal interest he may vest in them, are neither affirmed nor denied, but simply placed. A poem in this sense does not *mean*—it does not urge the feelings and opinions of the poet on the reader. It *is*—as a thing made it is self-sufficient (*perfectum*) and bears no message not indigenous to its perfection. But the poetic object, however much it dispatches the poet's words from the poet, is nevertheless an object (*objectum*, *Gegenstand*) and as such commands a response. [Mackey, pp. 284–85]

To command such a response, Kierkegaard composes his pseudonymous authorship. He explains that "a pseudonym is excellent for accentuating a point, a stance, a position. It creates a poetic person."<sup>25</sup> The "poeticized personalities" who act out the Kierkegaardian drama of existence are "personified possibilities,"<sup>26</sup> imaginative projections of fantastic, fictitious forms

25. *Papirer*, X<sup>1</sup> 510, in *Armed Neutrality and an Open Letter*, p. 88. For an elaboration of the points being made here, see Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship*, chap. 2.

26. Paul Holmer, "Kierkegaard and Ethical Theory." Holmer has analyzed this aspect of Kierkegaard's thought with unusual insight. Compare "Kierkegaard and Religious Propositions" and "On Understanding Kierkegaard."



of life that can serve as models for the despairing person's self-interpretation and self-judgment. The ideality of these imagined possibilities is essential to their function in Kierkegaard's aesthetic education.

Drawing on his understanding of Hegelian aesthetics, Kierkegaard maintains that the genuine work of art embodies an ideal form in the medium singularly appropriate to the idea it seeks to express. As Crites indicates, "the idea comes to consciousness only in the process of artistic creation itself, and only in the appropriate medium. The problem in art, as Hegel had shown, is to shape the material or medium in such a way that it will become as transparent as possible to its proper idea, so that the idea can, as it were, shine through the medium employed."<sup>27</sup> This artistic transparency is achieved only through abstraction from the tensions of finitude. The timeless ideality of the work of art articulates pure possibilities that stand in marked contrast to the confusing options faced in temporal experience. This atemporal ideality provides the occasion for aesthetic education. Borrowing a term from Hegel and the Platonic tradition, Kierkegaard argues that a person apprehends the aesthetic object by a process of "recollection." In recollection, one grasps ideal forms that are antecedent to and the presupposition of temporal existence. Aesthetic education affords the opportunity for self-clarification by transporting the individual from the conflicts and confusions of actual life to the momentary repose and clarity of the ideal realm of pure possibility. To attempt to remain in such aesthetic repose is, however, to fall victim to spiritlessness. Kierkegaard indicates that "art and poetry have been called anticipations of the eternal. If one desires to speak in this fashion, one must nevertheless note that art and poetry are not essentially related to an existing individual; for their contemplative enjoyment, the joy over what is beautiful, is disinterested, and the spectator of the work of art is contempla-

27. Stephen Crites, "Introduction," *Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, p. 29. Crites gives an excellent account of Kierkegaard's aesthetic theory and of its relation to Hegel's position. Compare "Pseudonymous Authorship as Art and as Act." I have benefited greatly from these two essays.

tively outside himself *qua* existing individual" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 277 n.).

In contrast to Hegel, Kierkegaard's aesthetic education is not an end in itself but has an unaesthetic, ethical purpose. On the one hand, "The aesthetic and intellectual principle is that no reality is thought or understood until its *esse* has been resolved into its *posse*." On the other, "The ethical principle is that no possibility is understood until each *posse* has really become an *esse*" (p. 288). Reflection becomes doubly reflected as recollection gives way to repetition. Explaining his poetic productions, Kierkegaard, under the guise of Johannes Climacus, writes: "A communication in the form of a possibility compels the recipient to face the problem of existing in it, so far as this is possible between man and man" (p. 320). Through his pseudonymous authorship, Kierkegaard attempts to extricate his reader from "the temptations of reflection" by occasioning a crisis of decision. His poeticized personalities force the reader to confront difficult choices; they lay a claim upon the will as well as upon the imagination. Pure possibilities, of course, must initially be grasped reflectively. But this reflective apprehension of imagined ideality is the propaedeutic to the existential act of "double reflection" in which possibility becomes actual and ideality is reflected in reality by means of the individual's free decision. A person does not achieve transparency (*Gjennemsigtighed*) simply by the appreciation of an ideality already implicit in his reality, but by volitional activity in which he struggles to become a living expression of the ideal he has conceived. In striving to "reduplicate" concept in being, one attempts to "exist" in what one understands."<sup>28</sup> To the extent that this

28. *Training in Christianity*, p. 133. Elsewhere Kierkegaard explains more fully: "However, coming into existence may present a reduplication, i.e., the possibility of a second coming into existence within the first coming into existence. Here we have the historical in the stricter sense, subject to a dialectic with respect to time. The coming into existence which in this sphere is identical with the coming into existence of nature is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole reality. But this historical coming into existence in the stricter sense is a coming into existence within a coming into existence." *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 94.

endeavor is successful, truth develops or the individual becomes truthful.

With respect to human existence, the identity of thought and being definitive of truth is not primordial but is historically emergent, born of the individual's free activity. Kierkegaard contends that in ethical and religious matters, "truth is subjectivity," or, as he explains, "*An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual*" (*Postscript*, p. 182). The important phrase in this definition for our purpose is "an appropriation-process" (*Tilegnelse*). Because the existing individual is in a state of becoming, his life is a constant approximation of the ideals he conceives. "Subjectivity" indicates the process by which an individual appropriates what he thinks, or constitutes his actuality by realizing his possibilities. Kierkegaard proceeds to identify subjectivity with truth for the existing individual: "The truth consists in nothing else than the self-activity of personal appropriation" (p. 217). As should be clear, this argument is not intended to deny the notion of truth as the conformity of thought and being. However, because the existing individual is in a process of becoming, Kierkegaard holds that such conformity is never reached as long as existence continues but remains an ideal that is asymptotically approximated. "Not for a single moment is it forgotten that the subject is an existing individual, and that existence is a process of becoming, and that therefore the notion of the truth as identity of thought and being is a chimera of abstraction, in its truth only an expectation of the creature; not because truth is not such an identity, but because the knower is an existing individual for whom the truth cannot be such an identity as long as he lives in time" (p. 176).

This understanding of the nature of religious truth further illuminates Kierkegaard's pedagogical strategy. Since true selfhood presupposes an individual's free actualization of possibility, the teacher must communicate with the pupil in an indirect manner. Instead of constantly identifying with and offering direct guidance to the reader,<sup>29</sup> the author must withdraw himself from

29. As Hegel does through the "phenomenological we."

the dialogic relation and leave the reader alone with imagined possibilities expressed in the poetic work. By insisting on the disparity between his ideas and his life, the poet directs the reader away from his person and toward his poetic creation. Kierkegaard's pseudonymity is the curtain separating him from the drama he stages. His multiple literary devices seek to focus the reader's attention on the play his personae enact rather than on the complex behind-the-scenes maneuvers necessary to mount the production.

For Kierkegaard, however, observation of the drama is not itself cathartic. The purification of spirit that cures the sickness unto death lies not in passive speculation but in practical action. Theoretical reflection is a necessary but not sufficient condition of the development of the inwardness necessary for authentic selfhood. To recollection must be added repetition, a movement Hegel never makes.

The dialectic of repetition is easy; for what is repeated has been, or it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been makes the repetition something new. When the Greeks said that all knowledge is recollection, they were saying that everything that comes into existence has been. When one says that life is a repetition, one is saying that the existence that has been now becomes. If one has neither the category of recollection nor that of repetition, the whole of life is dissolved into a vain and empty noise. Recollection is the pagan life-outlook, repetition is the modern. Repetition is the *interest* of metaphysics, and also the interest on which metaphysics is stranded; repetition is the solution of every ethical outlook; repetition is the *conditio sine qua non* for every dogmatic problem. [*Repetition*, p. 149]

From Kierkegaard's perspective, inwardness is not the result of a retrospective dialectic of recollection that grasps reality as the necessary outworking of ideality. To the contrary, inwardness presupposes a prospective dialectic of repetition that posits an abyss between ideality and actuality which can be bridged only by the contingent leap of the free individual. The stages of Kierkegaard's journey to selfhood are not internally related and do

not constitute a *necessary* progression. They represent distinct forms of life that can be realized only if they are willed by the individual. In a sense, Kierkegaard, too, has nothing to teach his pupil. He questions, but does not answer—his aesthetic education ends without result. He confesses that the “result is not in my power; it depends upon so many things, and above all it depends upon whether he [i.e., the reader] will or not. In all eternity it is impossible for me to compel a person to accept an opinion, a conviction, a belief. But one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice. In one sense this is the first thing, for it is the condition antecedent to the next thing, i.e., the acceptance of an opinion, a conviction, a belief. In another sense it is the last—if that is, he will not take the next step” (*Point of View*, p. 35). The journey to which Kierkegaard calls his reader is unending. *Omega* ever recedes, for the concluding chapter of the drama of selfhood can only be written after the final curtain falls.

### *Spiritlessness*

Though our course has been long, our conclusion can be brief. The intricate philosophical and theological works of Hegel and Kierkegaard share a common purpose: they seek to meet the need of the age by providing an aesthetic education that leads the individual from spiritlessness to spirit, from bondage to freedom, from inauthentic to authentic selfhood. And yet their educational journeys lead in opposite directions. What Hegel regards as self-realization Kierkegaard sees as self-alienation, and what Hegel interprets as self-estrangement is for Kierkegaard self-fulfillment. Conversely, what Kierkegaard views as authentic selfhood, Hegel believes to be inauthentic selfhood, and what Kierkegaard sees as inauthenticity is for Hegel authenticity. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* leads the reader to the contemplative re-cognition of the ideality of actuality through cognitive recollection. Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship leads the reader to the brink of decision by presenting idealities yet to be actualized through volitional repetition.

In light of such significant differences, the question of the basis

of the many ostensible similarities between the undertakings of Hegel and Kierkegaard inevitably arises. We can solve this final puzzle by recalling that both Hegel and Kierkegaard believe their respective pedagogies must begin with the standpoint of the pupil. For Kierkegaard, this means that the educational process has to commence with the spiritlessness of Christendom and its philosophy, Hegelianism. Kierkegaard's appropriation of Hegel's insights is consistently ironic. He assumes Hegel's perspective in order to negate it from within. Like Socrates before him, the poet Kierkegaard “allows the existent to exist though it has no validity for him, yet he pretends that it has and under this guise leads it on towards its certain dissolution. Insofar as the ironic subject is world historically justified, there is in this a unity of what is genial with artistic sobriety and discretion” (*Irony*, p. 281).

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## 12

## Kierkegaard's Negativistic Method

MICHAEL THEUNISSEN

## I. Introduction

1. ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND  
PSYCHIATRIC RECEPTION OF KIERKEGAARD

As Jaspers' *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (*General Psychopathology*)<sup>1</sup> shows, Kierkegaard exercised, from an early time on, a certain influence on the sciences of the disturbed psyche. In the last decades, however, several developments have started to take place in psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis which have either awakened a new interest in Kierkegaard or made him potentially interesting for these sciences. I should like to comment on only two tendencies here. The first is the reconsideration of the "self." We can observe this particularly well in the history of psychoanalytical theory.<sup>2</sup> Although Kierkegaard never worked out a concept of the unconscious and thus does not conceive becoming self as becoming conscious of the unconscious,<sup>3</sup> he has

This essay was translated by Charlotte Baumann under the supervision of the author.

1. K. Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (Berlin/Heidelberg: Julius Springer, 1913) [*General Psychopathology*, trans. J. Hoening and M. W. Hamilton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963)]. Jaspers refers to Kierkegaard only in the later editions of the book.

2. Cf. H. J. S. Guntrip, *Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), and H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971).

3. Cf. B. Wilshire, "Kierkegaard's Theory of Knowledge and New Directions in Psychology and Psychoanalysis," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 3 (1963): 249-61.